

The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Newsletter for Row Crops in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

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Volume XXXI, No. 6

May 17, 2006

## General Situation

The valley received some much needed rain late Sunday night and Monday morning. The valley received between 0.4 to 5 inches of rain, with a majority of the valley receiving around 1 inch. Although this rain is a relief to the drought conditions situation at this time, it will take several more similar rain showers to replenish the depleted soil profile with deep soil moisture. Several of the dryland fields have already reached cotton out and were blooming near the top of the plants. Therefore, the rainfall will not improve the yield potential.

## \$5 per acre rebate offered

During the April 10<sup>th</sup> Lower Rio Grande Valley Producer Committee for the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Program meeting, the growers proposed that a rebate be offered to those growers whose cotton acreage failed. This proposal was taken before the Boll Weevil Eradication Program state board and the commissioner of agriculture. On May 9<sup>th</sup> the commissioner approved a \$5 rebate for those growers who failed their crops by May 15<sup>th</sup>. The failed acres must remain unhostable for the remainder of the year. Additionally growers must provide access to all sides of the fields and keep all accounts current.

The rain that we received Sunday night, might bring about a struggle to those growers who had failed acreage. The seed that has lain

dormant in the soil for the last 2-3 months, now has the moisture it needs to sprout. Growers need to stay on top of this issue and continually monitor their fields to determine if the field has or will become hostable for boll weevils.

## Whitefly and Spidermites

The rain should help to alleviate some of the pressure from whiteflies and spidermites for the time being. Several of the whitefly adults, which are very weak flyers, were probably killed by the rain. The immature nymphal stage of the whiteflies which are found on the underside of the leaves were probably not effected by the rain. It will not be long before these immatures complete development and a new generation of adult whiteflies emerge.

Some spidermites may have been dislodge from the plants during the rain storm. Plus the rain will reduce the dusty conditions and reduce plant stress. Unstressed plants have the nutrients available to strengthen the plant making it more resistant to pests. However, the warm dry conditions have already returned to the valley and the rain may have only delayed the spider mite infestations. Drought can causes a change in plant chemistry, making it more nutritious to spider mites, allowing them to reproduce rapidly. Spider mites use their piercing mouthparts to pierce plant cells and suck out the contents from the

cell. The cells die and an appear as yellow spots on the top side of the leaf.

**Grain Sorghum**

Headworms have been observed and reported in scattered fields throughout the valley. Headworms are corn earworms (aka bollworm) and fall armyworms that feed on the emerged grain sorghum heads.



Fig. 2 Corn earworm feeding on a sorghum head

“Corn earworm and fall armyworm larvae feed on developing rain. Small larvae feed on flowering parts of the grain head at first, then hollow out kernels.



Fig. 1 Corn earworm feeding on a sorghum head

Larger larvae consume more kernels and cause most damage. Frass is common in infested grain heads, on tops of upper leaves and on the ground under plants. Under certain conditions, infested grain heads may have molds.

Natural mortality of small corn earworm and fall armyworm larvae is normally very high. Both corn earworm and fall armyworm moths can lay several hundred eggs on sorghum grain heads before or during flowering, but only a few larvae survive. Natural factors suppressing these insects include predators, parasites, pathogens and cannibalism among larvae.

Infestations usually are less in early than late-planted sorghum. An important management tactic is to use sorghum hybrids with loose (open) grain heads. Early-planted sorghum and hybrids with open grain heads usually are less infested” (excerpt from *Managing Insect and Mite Pests of Texas Sorghum*).

**Beneficial Insects**

Beneficial insects have increased in a majority of the cotton fields. Look for ladybird beetles, minute pirate bugs, lacewings, syrphid fly larvae and spiders. These beneficial probably built up on the aphid populations that we have seen building throughout the season.

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